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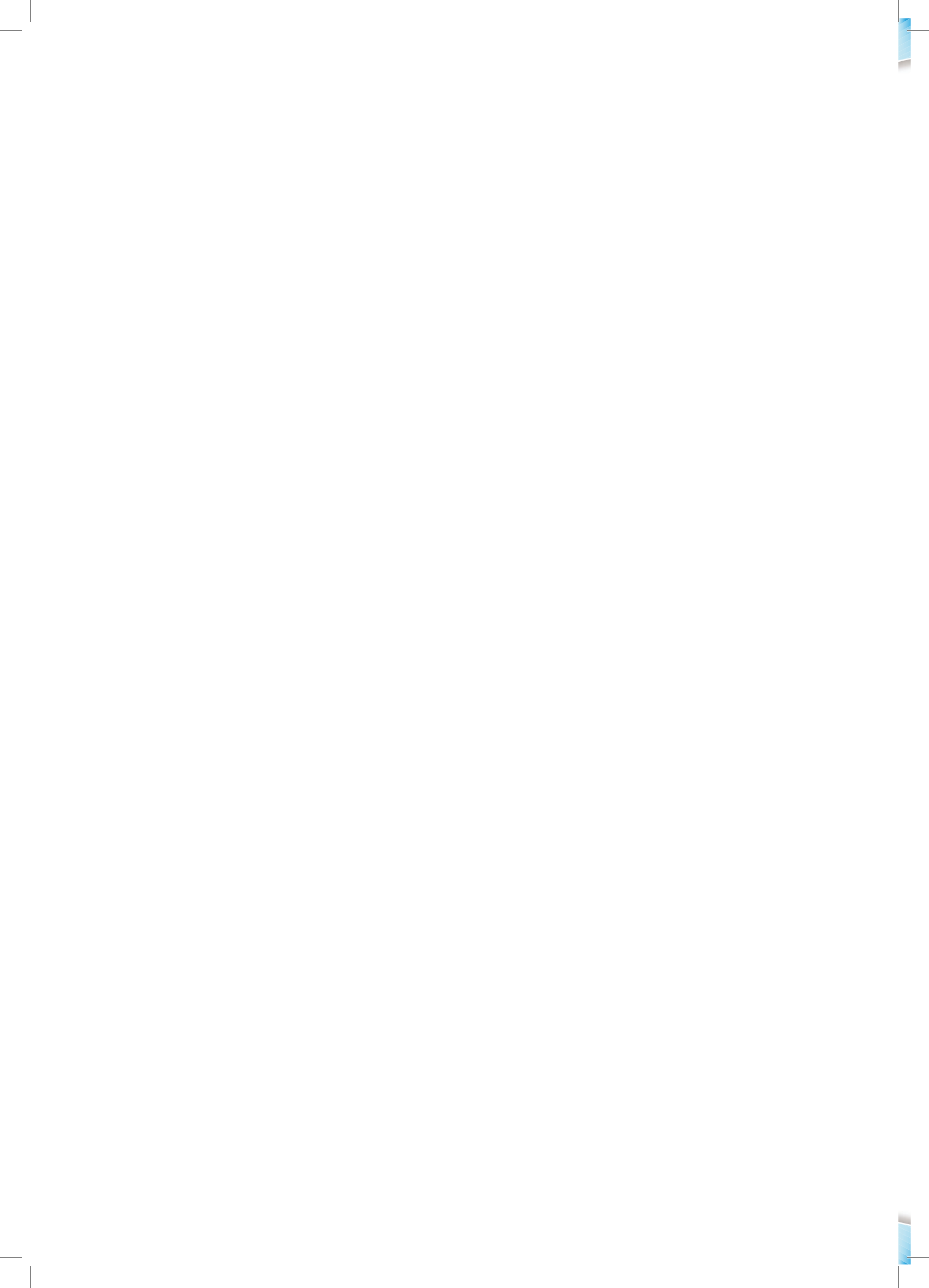
# Debate

*Instructional Resource Materials*

**Lesson 4: Basic Argumentation**



*Debaters Today, Leaders Tomorrow*





# Lesson Plan

## Part One – Unit 1

### Lesson 4: Basic Argumentation

#### Subject

Debate and the skills of debating

#### Topic

Basic Argumentation.

#### Level

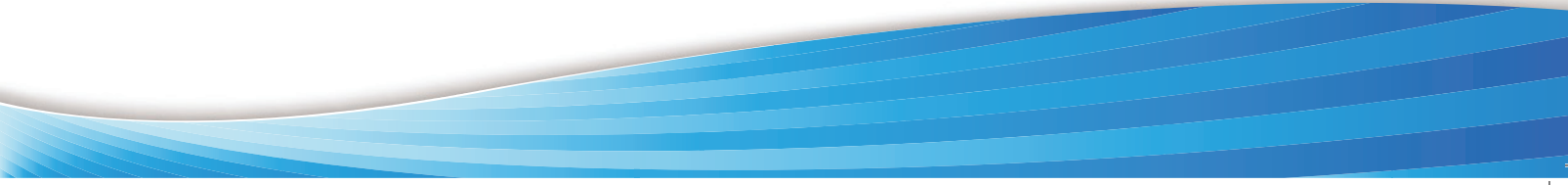
Intended audience: Beginners.

#### Projected Length of the Lesson

Depending on the number of the activities used in the lesson.

#### Pre-requisites

Lessons 1, 2 and 3.



## Description:

This lesson guides students through understanding and developing arguments. Whether it's an ad for a commercial product or a discussion with parents or peers, arguments are an inescapable part of our daily lives. In this lesson, students will learn to create good arguments by getting a handle on the basic structure. The lesson will provide useful tips for understanding and using Assertions (claims), Reasons, and Evidence. The lesson comprises activities that guide students through the process of delivering clear and effective arguments about different subjects.

## Goals

### The purpose of this lesson is to:

- This lesson aims to enable students to:
- Know and adhere to the general principles guiding argumentation.
- Have a basic understanding of the structure of arguments.
- Understand and formulate effective arguments.

## Objectives

### By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Learn strategies for distinguishing between facts and opinions.
- Understand the basics of argumentation.
- Understand the essential components of an argument.
- Identify what an effective argument is.
- Be able to construct effective arguments.

## Key words & phrases

- a) **Assertion:** A statement or claim (usually an opinion) about the world.
- b) **Reasoning** (elaboration and explanation): This is the “because” part of the argument. Reasoning makes the speaker’s assertion an argument.
- c) **Evidence** (support used to prove something): Provides proof to support your argument. The four types of evidence include: example, common sense, statistics and expert opinion.
- d) **Argument:** A conclusion together with the premises that support it.
- e) **Premise:** A reason offered as support for another claim.
- f) **Conclusion:** The claim being supported by a premise or premises.
- g) **Explanation:** A statement or set of statements designed to show why something is true rather than that it is true.

## Introduction

Once students are comfortable with the idea of formal debate and the roles of speakers in a debate, they now need to explore and learn about basic argumentation. The most important part of this lesson is introducing students to the basic components of argumentation using A–R–E (Assertion, Reasoning & Evidence). Students learn how to form opinions that are supported by facts using the A–R–E format. The instructor may start simple and discuss possible definitions of ‘Arguments’.

Materials

## Materials

- Computers with Internet access.
- Digital projector
- Writing pads
- Colored pens and/or highlighters
- Flipcharts

- Copies of newspaper articles (or articles from magazines and Internet sources).
- A small ball (Ping-Pong or tennis ball).

## Procedure

This section describes the different component parts of the present lesson.

### 1. Preparation (5 minutes)

- a) Provide notepads, colored pens, highlighters and/or pencils.
- b) Provide copies of newspaper articles (or articles from magazines and Internet sources).

### 2. Lesson

This part of the lesson includes the different steps followed in the delivery of the “Basic Argumentation” lesson.

Learning how to form opinions and support them using credible sources is a skill used by everyone from students, teachers and scholars to business leaders and politicians. The following are various exercises and activities that will engage students in argumentation.

## Session 1: Stage Fright

### Warm up Activity: Analyzing argumentative (persuasive) texts

- a) Ask students what they know about argumentative (persuasive) texts:
  - Who writes them (students, educators, scientists, politicians, etc.)?
  - Where are they found (essays, newspapers, magazines, speeches, etc.)?
  - What is their purpose?
- b) Mention that while some texts inform, entertain, or pay tribute, many argue a position on a current issue.
  - Show examples of argumentative (persuasive) texts from newspapers, magazines, and Internet sources.
- c) Tell them that:
  - (Persuasive) Argumentative writing is a type of writing that has its own conventions.
  - Argumentation is generally based on facts and logic to influence the reader.
- d) Ask the students if they have ever had a personal “unreasonable” verbal argument with a friend, family member, or peer.
  - Ask what took place that they considered unreasonable.
  - Write responses on the board (responses may include name-calling, cursing, begging, voice-raising, and so on.)
- e) Tell students that argumentation in argumentative (persuasive) texts is different from that of verbal quarrels because it usually is well-reasoned and should consider the opposing view.
- f) Discuss and write on the board common techniques of (persuasive) argumentation, including:
  - The writer’s definite point of view or position on the issue.
  - Maintaining the reader’s interest.
  - Using sound reasoning (reasons why the writer’s position should be considered).
  - Using solid evidence (examples, facts, and quotations to back up the position).

- Using one single topic per paragraph.
  - Very often, counter-arguments to the writer's view need to be considered.
  - End with a strong conclusion
- g) Model how to identify these techniques by referring to a (persuasive) argumentative text (or paragraph) on an overhead projector. The length and complexity of the text is at the instructor's discretion.
- h) After having one or a few students read aloud the text (or paragraph), ask the students to find examples of these techniques.
- Mark the text (or paragraph) as students respond.
- i) Ask students how the text/paragraph is structured.
- Draw a diagram of the structure on the board.

## Activity 2: Identifying Arguments

Students get to learn that in an argument, a speaker (much like an author) tries to convince listeners (or readers of written texts) to agree with his or her position on a particular issue or topic. This activity focuses on the use of effective arguments in debate.

The instructor needs to highlight the basic components of an argument: Assertion, Reasoning and Evidence (A–R–E). Accordingly, an argument is made up of assertions (or claims, or statements) in support of the speaker's position. The speaker also uses reasons and evidence to support these claims. Using reasons and evidence as support for assertions or claims in an argument helps convince the audience to agree with the speaker's position.

The students learn how to evaluate a speaker's argument, distinguishing between assertions that are supported by reasons and evidence and those that are not. Some useful tips instructors can use are listed below.

- a) Begin by prompting the students to brainstorm a list of words and concepts they would associate with an argument.
- b) Make a list of the words and concepts the students come up with and write them on the board.



- These may include: Argument, assertion, position, claim, opinion, view, reason, evidence, etc.
- c) Try to explain the meanings of and differences between these words.
- d) Based on the above, highlight the fact that the 3 words that make up an argument are Assertion, Reasoning, and Evidence.
- e) Define or explain the meaning of each and provide examples to illustrate the points. For instance:
  - Assertion refers to a claim or opinion that something is true. It states the speaker's position with regard to a certain topic. For example:
    - "Animal cloning should be banned."
    - "Exposure to violent TV programs increases the tendency for violent behavior."
    - "Younger people are more computer savvy than older people."
  - Reasoning: This is the "because" part of an argument. It explains why something happened, why someone did something, or why something is true. Reasoning makes an assertion an argument. For example:
    - "Animal cloning should be banned because ..."
    - "Exposure to violent TV programs increases the tendency for violent behavior because ..."
    - "Younger people are more computer savvy than older people because ..."
  - Evidence provides proof to support an argument.
    - The four types of evidence include: example, common sense, statistics and expert opinion.
- f) Ask the students to think about the following questions and provide answers:
  - What is an argument?
  - How is an argument different from an opinion?
  - How is an argument different from an assertion?
  - Why do you need reasons?
  - How is reasoning different from evidence?
  - Why do you need evidence?

- g) The following model may be used to further clarify how arguments are formulated:
- “Homework is a waste of time [claim] because it takes time away from other activities that are more important [Reasoning]. For example, we end up doing worksheets of math problems instead of getting outside to get fresh air and exercise [Evidence].”
  - “Television news is boring [claim] because it doesn’t talk about issues that are relevant to me [Reasoning]. For example, I never see stories about the issues that kids deal with every day [Evidence].”
  - “Tomato soup is better than a grilled cheese sandwich [claim] because it is more nutritious [Reasoning]. For example, tomato soup contains important vitamins, while grilled cheese sandwiches really don’t have that much nutritional value at all [Evidence].”
- h) Next, distribute a short example of an argumentative text (written text or speech transcript) and direct the students to:
- Read the text.
  - Skim the text to locate arguments, assertions/claims, reasons, and evidence (examples, etc.).
  - Use colored pens and/or highlighters to mark the text identifying the primary features of an argument. For example:
    - Underline the main argument in blue.
    - Circle the assertions/claims in red.
    - Highlight relevant evidence to support each assertion/claim in yellow.
    - Underline the concluding statement in green.
- i) Use a digital projector and have several students share their text markings with the class and explain their choices.
- j) Guide the discussion and highlight similarities and differences in student text marks and discuss reasons for these variances with the class.
- k) Review students’ understanding of the terms related to composing an argument: Assertion, Reasons, and Evidence.

### Activity 3: Analysis of a Newspaper Article

- a) Split the class into groups of 3–4, depending on class size.
- b) Provide each group with a newspaper or magazine article.
- c) Students read and analyze the articles.
- d) Each group is to provide feedback summary to the class.
- e) Have the students try and provide brief answers to these questions:
  - Who wrote the article?
  - What is the article about?
  - What is the purpose of this article?
  - What does the writer intend to transmit?
  - How does the writer transmit the information?
  - What claims and/or arguments does the writer present?
  - How does the writer defend these claims/arguments?
  - What evidence does the writer give to support his claims and arguments?
  - Does the article reflect the writer's opinion on its topic, or is it purely objective?
  - What possible sources of evidence are not included?
  - Allow some time for discussion, depending on the size of the group.

### Possible Extension

A possible extension of this exercise would be to have each student locate an argumentative (persuasive) text in a newspaper, magazine, or Internet source.

- a) Ask students to silently read and mark the text.
- b) Divide them into groups to discuss their texts.
- c) Have them address the questions:
  - What is the issue the writer is arguing?
  - Is the argument clearly stated?
  - What makes the argument effective?

- Is it organized logically?
- What is his/her position on the issue?
- Does it convince the reader to think or act in a certain way?
- Has he/she argued convincingly with reasons, examples, quotes, and so on to convince the reader?

### Activity 4: Identifying Arguments

In an instructor–directed discussion, students explore ways of presenting arguments – written or spoken – to influence audiences. They look closely at sample arguments and share their findings in groups.

- a) Propose and write a prompt on the board or overhead. For example:
- All advances in technology come with positive and negative impacts. Some people believe all technologies are negative; others see the development of technology as the answer to all of our problems.
  - Many celebrities – such as actors, musicians, models, or athletes – make a great deal of money.
  - Paternity leaves to allow fathers to stay home with their newborns.
  - Some children spend too much time viewing television.
  - Boys and girls should go to different schools.
  - Computers improve our daily lives.
  - Using animals in laboratory experiments is necessary for science improvement.
  - Serving in the military has to be made compulsory.
  - Using mobile phones in school should be allowed.

Other controversial topics that can be used are: Abortion, animal rights, border control, ethnic adoption, death penalty, genetic cloning, plastic surgery, human trafficking, etc.

- b) Split the class into groups of 3–4, depending on the size of the class.
- c) Each group chooses one prompt.

- d) Give the students 3–5 minutes to discuss the prompt they have chosen.
- e) Direct them to record the following:
  - The side of the argument they support or oppose ('for' or 'against').
  - The reason(s) that support(s) their claims or assertions.
  - A few specific examples (evidence).
- f) When students have finished writing, facilitate a short discussion about the prompt.
- g) Ask students to:
  - Share the examples they recorded.
  - Explain why it is important to be able to clearly state their opinions.
  - Explain why it is necessary to support opinions with credible facts, reasons, and examples.
  - Explain how one's inability to state and support an opinion can have negative implications for them.
- h) You may also have the students think about the following questions:
  - What are the pros and cons of the topic they have chosen?
  - What would people who support the topic say?
  - What would people who oppose the topic say?
  - What are the personal opinions of the students?
  - Try to think of a compromise for each of these issues.

### **Activity 5: Fun activity**

The aim of this exercise is to get students to practice their public speaking skills, with the purpose of engaging their audience. They are required to use the A–R–E format in order to sell a product. Students will be expected to create a one-minute commercial, using the A–R–E format.

- a) Demonstrate the difference between an interesting commercial and a boring one simply by changing your voice tone and the pace at which you speak.

- b) Discuss some common commercials and ask the students to look for the A–R–E in each.
- c) You may bring in magazine advertisements and guide the students as they try to identify the A–R–E in those ads.
- d) The students may work individually or in pairs.
- e) Give the students 30 minutes to create a one–minute commercial, asking them to make sure to include the A–R–E in their commercials.
- f) Have students present the commercial to the class.
- g) Encourage the students to include a jingle or a song and make sure this is acknowledged in some form, for example giving extra points.

### Activity 6: Boll Toss Game

- a) Have the students in class form a circle.
- b) Choose an interesting topic on a social, political issue.
- c) Point out that you will start (or choose someone to start) the game.
- d) Hold the ball and state whether you are ‘for’ or ‘against’ the chosen topic and make an argument for the topic.
- e) Provide reasons that support the position you have taken.
- f) Randomly toss the ball to a student in the circle.
- g) Decide if the next speaker should support or oppose the topic.
- h) Explain that arguments should not be repeated.
- i) The game should keep going until the students run out of unique arguments.

An alternate is to tell the student who receives the ball they have to take an opposite stand on the topic (if you are ‘for’, then the student’s position will be ‘against’ it and vice-versa).

- Once this is done, the student tosses the ball to another student in the circle and the game continues until everyone has completed their role.

## Activity 7: Balloon Game

This activity, a version of which is also used in the Public Speaking lesson, shows the importance of argumentation and persuasion.

A hot air balloon is losing height rapidly and will soon crash because it is overweight. You have to get rid of some of the passengers.

- a) Explain that the game involves students assuming the roles of different personalities.
  - Each student tries to convince the others that he/she deserves to stay on board the balloon.
- b) Bring 6–10 students to the front of the room.
- c) Have them each play the role of a famous person (historical figure, scientist, scholar, etc.).
- d) Then explain the scenario to them:
  - They are all in a hot air balloon and it's sinking so some of them must be thrown overboard.
  - They must each give one argument why they should be allowed to stay on board.
  - Once they have all stated their arguments, have the group vote on who should stay; the others sit down.
  - Now they must say why another person should be thrown over instead of them.
  - Have the students vote again.
  - Analyze good arguments based on A–R–E.
  - The game may be repeated.

After students have passed this stage and are comfortable with themselves and their classmates or speaking in front of a group in general, they are ready to begin giving speeches. Some more advanced Public Speaking Drills are given below.

## Activity 8: Using evidence

- a) Give students a topic that may be of interest to them (e.g. economics, international relations, society, religion, environment, morality, etc.).
- b) Give them some evidence related to the topic.
- c) Ask them to develop an argument where they can use the evidence.
- d) You may ask them if there is any principle they can extract on the basis of the evidence so that they could apply the same argument in a different debate.

## Activity 9: Developing Arguments

The purpose of this activity is to show students how they should develop their arguments to reach conclusions that are generally accepted or that everyone agrees with.

- a) Divide the class into 2 groups
- b) Form two lines a few inches apart facing each other.
- c) Set a topic (or motion or statement) for discussion.
- d) Ask a student at one end of the line to the left to come up with an argument.
- e) Have the student standing opposite from the line to the right refute the argument
  - It is very important they only refute the argument and not come up with counter arguments.
- f) The second student in the left line should defend the argument.
- g) The second student to the right should oppose.
  - Carry on the game goes on until you reach the end of the line.
- h) By the end, the argument will be much better developed, which shows the student how to think about argument development.
- i) Encourage the class to ask Why questions every time they don't fully agree with an argument.



- j) After one argument is over bring the first student to the end of the line and start again with a different argument.

### Activity 10: A–R–E

This activity helps students learn how to form opinions that are supported by facts using the A–R–E format.

- a) The instructor explains the ‘triangular’ process of expressing opinions, starting with (i) asserting, followed by (ii) giving reasons and ending with (iii) providing evidence.
- Assert an opinion.
  - Reason why it is correct.
  - Give evidence in support of the reason(s). This should be a fact that cannot be argued with.
- b) Give students a chance to fully digest this process by trying different topics and examples.
- Begin by writing a topic on the board that students can argue ‘for’ or ‘against’ without doing any research. For example: “Television does more harm than good.”
- c) Ask students to provide
- Reasons.
  - Evidence of how this is true or false.
- d) You can write something like this on the board:
- **Assertion:** “There is a lot of violence on TV.”
  - **Reason:** “Children copy what they see on TV when they play. When they see violence, that’s what they do.”
  - **Evidence:** “When kids play together they act out scenes they see on shows like the Power Rangers. They hit, kick, and fight each other for fun.”
  - **So what?** (This is the conclusion.) “Television does more harm than good because kids imitate the violence in the shows that are made for children. Violence is not good, so kids should not be doing it.”

- e) Then, have the students put the other ideas they come up with into the A–R–E format. This can be done verbally.
- f) Either ask students what topics they would like to debate, or suggest topics. Possible topic suggestions that don't require research include:
  - Eating meat is wrong.
  - Parents should pay for their children's crimes.
  - English should be the official language of (India, Kenya, etc.).
  - Beauty pageants do more harm than good.
  - Schools should eliminate letter grades.
  - Smoking should be banned in all public places
- g) Write the topic on the board, and get students to create 2 arguments using the Argumentation sheet (Appendices 1 and 2).

### Activity 11: Composing Arguments

- a) Prompt students to brainstorm a controversial topic or issue of their choosing; for example:
  - Capital punishment.
  - Euthanasia.
  - Gun control in the USA.
  - Use of technology in the classroom.
  - Junk food at school.
- b) Ask them to consider both sides of the topic/issue no matter where their opinions lie.
- c) Make sure the students understand the issue, the problems connected with it and any unfamiliar vocabulary they may encounter.
- d) Have the students think–pair–share their ideas with a partner.
- e) Encourage them to take a position in response to the topic/issue (either 'for' or 'against').
- f) Have them independently compose an adequate argument that reflects their position on the topic/issue.

- Their arguments should meet the requirements for composing effective arguments (A–R–E).
- g) Next, ask them to brainstorm a list of 3–4 reasons to support their position.
  - They need to support their claims by giving reasons using their own ideas and background knowledge.
- g) Ask them to think of evidence to support their claims (examples, statistics, expert opinion, etc.).
- h) Have student think–pair–share their ideas with a partner.

An extension of this activity may comprise a mini–debate where the instructor asks the students to read about a topic(s) selected from the list above (Capital punishment, Euthanasia, etc.). After practicing new vocabulary, students have the opportunity to discuss their viewpoints about capital punishment and have a formal debate guided by the instructor.

## Appendix 1: Structure of Arguments

<b>Assertion (Claim)</b>	<p>State your position clearly:</p> <p>“ ..... ”</p> <p>..... ”</p>
<b>Reason</b>	<p>Explain why you’ve taken this position:</p> <p>“ ..... ”</p> <p>because ..... ”</p>
<b>Evidence</b>	<p>Provide supporting evidence:</p> <p>a) Verifiable facts</p> <p>b) Statistics</p> <p>c) Expert testimony, etc.</p>
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## Appendix 2: Assertion - Reasoning - Evidence (ARE)

**Assertion: (The point you are arguing)**

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**Reasoning: (Because...)**

(Use at least 3 reasons)

Reason#1:	Reason#2:	Reason #3:

**Evidence: ( For Example....)**

(Use at least 3 pieces of evidence that connect directly to your reasoning)

Evidence to Support Reason #1:	Evidence to Support Reason #2:	Evidence to Support Reason #3:







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